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ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses the plight of migrant secondary students moving across district lines and encountering challenges such as credit accrual and lack of academic resources. Although graduation requirements differ from state to state, they all amount to a kind of bookkeeping that determines whether a student graduates from high school. The chances of attaining high school graduation are affected by state and local course requirements, continuity of curricula between districts, differing school schedules, and the efficiency of student record transfer systems. Many common school policies and practices diminish the cultural capital of migrant youth and their families, making it difficult for migrant students to stay in school. Linguistically and culturally diverse students face institutional barriers, and their parents often are excluded from involvement in their education. In addition, increased high-stakes testing places even greater pressures on migrant students, who may not be present for test preparation and testing opportunities. Migrant students who aspire to postsecondary education face additional barriers. College preparatory math acts as a gate-keeping tool in the selection of students for college, and migrant students often are placed in lower tracks without access to advanced math courses. Migrant students also lack access to the special knowledge that facilitates college preparation and admission. Fictional scenarios illustrate these difficulties and potential remedies that educators could pursue. (SV)

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CHAPTER 9

Graduation Enhancement and Postsecondary Opportunities for Migrant Students: Issues and Approaches

BY CINTHIA SALINAS AND REYNALDO REYES

In 1973, José Cárdenas and Blandina Cárdenas described the educational challenges for migrant children who move frequently:

> The typical instructional program, with built-in continuity and sequences that assume that the child in the classroom today was there yesterday and will be there tomorrow, is incompatible with this mobility. The program discontinuity problem must be faced with either a mobile curriculum or with a highly individualized instructional program.[1]

Each day, nearly 800,000 migrant students enroll in public schools[2] without the benefit of migrant-compatible schooling policies and practices. Within schools, migrant students can be described as

[1]José Cárdenas and Blandina Cárdenas, "The Theory of Incompatibilities," in *Multicultural Education: A Generation of Advocacy*, ed. José Cárdenas (Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster Custom, 1995), 26.

[2]Allison Henderson and Julie Daft, *State Title I Migrant Participation Information 1998-99*, prepared for Office of the Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education (Rockville, MD: Westat, 2002), http://mirror.eschina.bnu.edu.cn/Mirror/ed.gov/www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/mig9899rev.pdf (accessed October 31, 2003).

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bilingual or monolingual, gifted or with special needs, and successful or failing. The complexity of their lives, their contributions, and the education landscape cannot be understated. These dynamics are most complex at the secondary level, where migrant students encounter numerous challenges that require educators to respond in highly individualized ways.

What We Know about the Education of Migrant Children

Student populations are growing increasingly diverse in urban, suburban, and rural schools, forcing schools to address the cultural and linguistic needs of their students. Despite reform efforts and decades of various programs, "social and demographic changes would appear to outdistance our ability to develop the technologies, practices, and capacity necessary to cope with classroom circumstances" of today's schools.[3] This is especially true in migrant education. Migrant students and their families are a composite of valuable resources and experiences of cultural and linguistic diversity; yet, the challenging aspects of mobility and low income, characteristic of many migrant families and their children, can overwhelm educators.[4]

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended and reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, mandates that states must "ensure that migratory children who move among the States are not penalized in any manner by disparities among the States in curriculum, graduation requirements, and State academic content and student academic achievement standards."[5] This requires secondary schools to pay particularly close attention to credit accrual for graduation, drop-out prevention, and postsecondary education transition as these issues pertain to migrant students.

Administrators and educators often overlook the importance of a systematic and effective approach to credit accrual. One study has

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[3]Alicia Paredes Scribner, "High-Performing Hispanic Schools: An Introduction," in *Lessons from High-Performing Hispanic Schools: Creating Learning Communities*, ed. Pedro Reyes, Jay D. Scribner, and Alicia Paredes Scribner (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 1.

[4]Denise McKeon, "Language, Culture, and Schooling," in *Educating Second Language Children: The Whole Child, the Whole Curriculum, the Whole Community*, ed. Fred Genesee (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[5]*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, U.S. Code*, vol. 20, sec. 1301 (2002), http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/pg8.html/ (accessed January 8, 2003).

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shown that "migrant secondary students face significant odds in graduating from high school due to lack of credit accrual. Their mobile lifestyle creates a need for innovative solutions to address what is generally perceived as a fragmentation in their education, making it very difficult to accumulate credit and graduate, if at all."[6] Like so many immigrant and recently arrived students from different countries, cultures, and education backgrounds, migrant students and their families are typically uninformed about the American school culture and credits required for a high school diploma. School administration decisions and attitudes make it more difficult for migrant students to acquire the credits necessary for graduation even after attending class and fulfilling coursework requirements for a large portion of the school year. The most significant problem is that migrant students must disentangle many course and credit requirements as they transfer from school to school.[7]

The most recent of the rare studies of migrant student drop-out rates found that, despite an increase in migrant student graduation, the drop-out rate remained high at about 50 percent in the late 1980s.[8] It is important to note that nearly 86 percent of migrant students are Hispanic and that 40 percent have limited English proficiency. One study found that "while accounting for just 56% of all U.S. immigrants, Latinos account for nearly 96% of all immigrant dropouts."[9] Another study reported that lower academic achievement and high drop-out rates among migrant students can be attributed to frequent movement

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[6]The STAR Center, *GEMS: Graduation Enhancement for Migrant Students* (San Antonio: STAR Center [Support for Academic Renewal], Intercultural Development Research Association, 1997) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 419 640), i.

[7]Harriet D. Romo and Toni Falbo, *Latino High School Graduation: Defying the Odds* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); Cárdenas and Cárdenas, "Theory of Incompatibilities"; and Pedro Reyes, Carol Fletcher, and Monica Molina, "Successful Migrant Students: The Case of Mathematics" (paper presented at the Texas Annual Migrant State Conference, El Paso, 1998).

[8]State University of New York (SUNY) Oneonta Migrant Programs, *Migrant Attrition Project: Executive Summary* (Oneonta, NY: MAP Project, 1987); Vamos, Inc., *National Migrant Student Graduation Rate Formula* (Geneseo, NY: BOCES Geneseo Migrant Center, 1992).

[9]Walter G. Secada and others, *No More Excuses: The Final Report of the Hispanic Dropout Project* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs, 1998) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 461 447), 2.

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from school to school throughout the academic year, constant adjustments to different social and academic environments, and confusing systems of record keeping and credit transfers. A number of programs have attempted to address the complexities that contribute to migrant students dropping out; however, a lack of cohesiveness among programs from state to state has added to the number of migrant students not finishing high school.[10]

A real impediment to addressing conditions contributing to high drop-out rates is the paucity of research related directly to migrant student education. While many studies have focused on the best practices for linguistically diverse students, little attention has been given to the unique needs of migrant children and their families. An orchestrated research effort needs to target the many facets of migrant education, especially effective secondary education models and approaches that serve migrant children.

This chapter addresses the plight of secondary education students moving across district lines and encountering challenges such as credit accrual and lack of academic resources. The chapter looks at beneficial programs and how secondary educators can help migrant students.

Course by Course: Working toward Migrant Student Credit Accrual

Though graduation requirements vary from state to state and even district to district, they all amount to a kind of bookkeeping that determines whether or not a student will receive a high school diploma. As migrant students move from school to school, they run the risk of losing course credits in several ways. As a result, high school completion becomes increasingly arduous for them. Several

[10]Anne Salerno and Mary A. Fink, *Dropout Retrieval Report: Thoughts on Dropout Prevention and Retrieval* (Tallahassee: Florida State Department of Education, 1989) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 318 595); Cheryl L. Sattler and Charles J. Edwards, *Title 1 Handbook* (Washington, DC: Thompson, 2002); J. Lamarr Cox and others, *Descriptive Study of the Chapter 1 Migrant Education Program: Volume I: Study Findings and Conclusions* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, 1992) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 355 085); and Yolanda G. Martinez, "Voices from the Field: Interviews with Students from Migrant Farmworker Families," *The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students* 14 (winter 1994): 333-48.

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key issues factor in, including inconsistent state or local course requirements, continuity of curricula, differing scheduling configurations, and efficiency of record transfer systems.[11]

An example of the inconsistencies in course requirements is that New Mexico's minimum requirement for high school graduation is 23 units while Texas requires 22. Additionally, elective requirements for each state differ. For example, New Mexico requires a minimum of 7.5 electives while Texas requires 5.5. Migrant students may move from Texas to a New Mexico high school believing erroneously they have earned all elective requirements. The additional coursework to meet New Mexico's elective requirements could conflict with other required coursework and further delay credit accrual and graduation. Thus, migrant students often encounter deficiencies in their degree plans and are forced to disregard previously completed courses. Some migrant students also are expected to catch up quickly on local credits.

Despite a significant need for a national system, little uniformity exists among or even within states.[12] As migrant students move from school to school, the repeated changes of teachers, textbooks and materials, and curricula (including state/district standards) can affect their ability to complete credits. Migrant students may encounter differing approaches to teaching algebra, or new writing programs in their English courses, or local course requirements.

In an ethnographic study of migrant families, Joseph Prewitt-Díaz and his fellow researchers found that continual moving has a deep impact on the social, psychological, and academic lives of the children. One student commented that moving from school to school is hard "cause you don't know anything, you don't know what they are going to teach, you don't know the people around." He added that his

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[11]Bruce C. Straits, "Residence, Migration, and School Progress." *Sociology of Education* 60, no. 1 (January 1987): 34-43; Janis K. Lunon, *Migrant Student Record Transfer System: What Is It and Who Uses It?* (ERIC Digest) (Las Cruces, NM: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1986) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 286 700); and Anne Salerno, *Migrant Students Who Leave School Early: Strategies for Retrieval* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1991) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 335 179).

[12]State of New Mexico Department of Education Web Site, http://sde.state.nm.us/ (accessed January 13, 2003); and Texas Education Agency Web Site, http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ (accessed January 13, 2003).

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friends "don't like moving around all the time a lot, and it's hard to make friends and to adjust." The end result, which often magnifies the possibility of losing credits, is a need to adjust abruptly to new friends, school, teachers, texts and materials, and curricula.[13]

Another growing challenge is differing high school scheduling configurations, based upon the pressures of growing state and local course requirements. Florida, for example, requires a minimum of 24 credits for graduation while Texas requires 22. The credit requirements vary within subjects as well (e.g., three credits of science in Florida and two in Texas). To meet graduation requirements, some high schools offer students the traditional scheduling format of six courses to be completed in the academic year while other high schools have implemented a block or accelerated block scheduling schema, through which students can receive eight credits per academic year. Imagine the potential problems when students transfer from a six-course to an eight-course block schedule high school. A student is faced immediately with a mismatch between the courses previously taken and the courses at the new school. Consider a student taking six courses at high school A, including Algebra I as a year-long course. The student transfers in October to high school B that offers Algebra I as a semester-long course (accelerated block). The student instantly is behind other students and will need to receive accelerated instruction. Keep in mind that this student was enrolled in six year-long courses while her peers were enrolled in four courses each semester. In sum, this migrant student would need to receive accelerated instruction in four courses and drop two courses until the spring semester.

Finally, secondary migrant students are confronted with a patchwork of student record transfer systems. No comprehensive national record system for migrant students has existed since the demise of the Migrant Student Records Transfer System (MSRTS) in 1995 (see chapters by Branz-Spall or Pappamihiel). As a result, migrant students have needed to rely primarily on the informal inter- and intrastate cooperation of counselors or registrar officials. Overworked and understaffed

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[13]Joseph O. Prewitt-Díaz, Robert T. Trotter, II, and Vidal A. Rivera, Jr., *Effects of Migration on Children: An Ethnographic Study* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of Migrant Education, 1989) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 327 346), 90, 91.

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school officials are hard pressed to deliver records in a timely fashion. Though some states have formed joint systems to help facilitate the transfer of records (e.g., New Generation System), these impressive efforts are not an all-encompassing approach. Without a network of well-informed, skilled migrant educators, inevitable delays or errors will occur in student credit accrual.

In fictional Scenario 1, educators should address three basic areas to support Angela's education. First, she should be helped to develop a graduation plan that acknowledges her strengths, considers her postsecondary options, and addresses the unique challenges she will encounter as a migrant student. Second, she needs to receive a variety of academic services, including those that help her complete credits and achieve a passing score on the state's standardized tests. For example, correspondence courses, computer programs and services in labs, and distance-learning curricula like Summer Migrants Access Resources Through Technology Program (SMART) are readily available or can be found by checking with regional service centers or state migrant offices. Each of these, however, is aided by the third consideration of academic support. Teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals, and students should contemplate how they collectively can help ensure that Angela will be successful.

Scenario 1: Credit Transfer Problems

Angela Gomez is just registering at McAllen High School in McAllen, Texas. This coming school year, Angela's family will return to McAllen in February after living in the Fremont, Ohio, area for three years. Before returning to McAllen, the family plans to migrate to Galveston, Indiana, to pick tomatoes, then to Michigan to pick cherries, and so forth. They will continue into Indiana and Florida before finally returning to McAllen in February. In Ohio, Angela was a junior, but she is not sure how many of her credits will transfer. She was enrolled in General Consumer Math, English III, Biology, World History, a local credit, and a vocational education course. McAllen High School follows a block schedule with eight courses credited per year, while the high school Angela attended in Ohio followed a more traditional approach of six courses per year. She is worried about her classes transferring from Ohio to Texas and about taking the Exit-level TAKS, the standardized test required for graduation in Texas.

Educators are most responsible for helping all students accrue the necessary credits. They should raise their awareness about

credit-accrual issues and dilemmas that migrant students encounter. Educators need to understand the consequences to migrant students when making curricular and course-requirement policy decisions. Above all, educators should be proactive in addressing the needs of migrant students.

Keeping Migrant Students in School: Valuing Migrant Children and Their Families

In general, many common school policies and practices diminish the cultural capital migrant children and their families bring to school, making it very difficult for migrant high school students to stay in school.[14] Anne Salerno and Mary A. Fink have concluded that approximately 50 percent of migrant students today do not complete high school—an improvement from 20 years ago, when 90 percent were dropping out. This positive trend is in danger of reversing for a number of reasons. First, linguistically and culturally diverse students face institutional barriers. Second, like parents of other linguistically and culturally diverse students, migrant parents are much more likely to be left out of the equation. Finally, high-stakes testing places even greater pressure on migrant students, who often are not present for many of the test preparation and testing opportunities.[15]

Mobility issues. While some educators see only the problems created by student mobility, it is important to also recognize the various strengths of migrant students. Migrant students bring cultural diversity and bilingualism to the classroom; continual moving from place to place tends to build in migrants tenacity and a sense of responsibility. At an early age, migrant children come to understand

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[14]Cárdenas and Cárdenas, "Theory of Incompatibilities"; Sonia Nieto, *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999); and María de la Luz Reyes and John J. Halcón, eds., *The Best for Our Children: Critical Perspectives on Literacy for Latino Students* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001).

[15]Salerno and Fink, *Dropout Retrieval Report*; Enrique T. Trueba, *Raising Silent Voices: Educating the Linguistic Minorities for the 21st Century* (New York: Newbury House, 1989); Maria E. Matute-Bianchi, "Situational Ethnicity and Patterns of School Performance among Immigrant and Non-immigrant Mexican-Descent Students," in *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities*, ed. Margaret A. Gibson and John U. Ogbu (New York: Garland, 1991); and María E. Fránquiz, "It's about YOUth!: Chicano High School Students Revisioning their Academic Identity," in *Best for Our Children*.

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the dilemmas and perspectives unique to their migrancy. Good practice would dictate that we build upon migrant students' existing knowledge base and help design instruction that fits them better. Instead, it is easier for many educators to continue with existing curricula and pedagogy while belaboring the inconvenience of having migrant students arrive late and leave early during the academic year. Schools should realize the strengths of migrant families and organize resources that will enable migrants to stay in school and achieve academic success.

Parent involvement. Compounding these challenges is the exclusion of migrant parents from the schooling of their own children. Again, researchers have documented the failure of schools to include linguistically and culturally diverse parents in the schooling process. Schools often cite language difference and lack of interest on the part of parents, but the reality is that many schools intentionally exclude communities that do not reflect the values and beliefs of White, middle-class America.[16]

An often-overlooked provision of ESEA legislation is the required involvement of parents in the district/campus decision-making process. Schools that do not involve parents of migrant children create additional barriers. Not only do migrant parents retain a rich understanding of their children, they also possess resources that could ensure their children's success.

High-stakes testing. Finally, the use of high-stakes standardized testing exacerbates the challenges encountered by migrant students. The current testing mania that consumes public schools increases the chances of a migrant student dropping out. Consider that migrant students are present sporadically or not at all for much of the test preparation and testing that occurs throughout the year. Regardless of their inherent goodness or badness, test preparation and practice help students and their parents better understand test formats and the

[16]Romo and Falbo, *Latino High School Graduation*; Alicia Salinas Sosa, "Involving Hispanic Parents in Improving Educational Opportunities for Their Children," in *Children of La Frontera: Binational Efforts to Serve Mexican Migrant and Immigrant Students*, ed. Judith LeBlanc Flores (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1996) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 393 649); Nancy Feyl Chavkin, "Involving Migrant Families in Their Children's Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Schools," in *Children of La Frontera*; and Nieto, *Light in Their Eyes*.

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significance of testing—in many states, high-stakes testing now affects promotion and graduation. The barrage of tests and consequences of testing can easily discourage migrant students and their parents.

Several school strategies could improve situations such as fictional Scenario 2. First, school administrators should ask themselves whether the curriculum engages students like Amanda: Is the material relevant to the lives of our students? How do we incorporate the knowledge of migrant children and their families into our teaching? Second, secondary schools need to make a special effort to involve parents; while involvement at the elementary level is quite common, secondary schools have struggled with approaches. Schools should undertake a self-study, immerse themselves in the parent involvement literature, and make changes that value all communities. Finally, personnel at the state, district, and campus levels should become familiar with the testing practices, policies, and procedures of other states and share this information with students, families, and teachers.

Scenario 2: Family Involvement and High Stakes Tests

Amanda Guerrero is in the 10th grade at Taylor High in Seattle, Washington. She lives with her grandparents in a community housing project. The family migrates every summer to Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio to detassel corn, pick tomatoes, and pick cucumbers. This past school year, Amanda was in trouble a lot. She was suspended twice and started hanging around with gang members outside of school. Amanda doesn't like school. She thinks of it as a waste of time, regularly skips class, and is indifferent to her failing grades. Her grandmother has gone to the school several times to talk to Amanda's counselor and the assistant principal. On one occasion, she explained to the counselor that when the family is down south, Amanda attends summer school and does quite well. The grandmother boasted that Amanda received a certificate for best attendance last summer and will be eligible to take the Texas standardized high-school-level test (Exit-level TAKS) in any of the above receiving states this summer. Obviously, her grandmother is worried about the test and Amanda's chances of graduating from high school.

Migrant children face the same difficult odds that other marginalized students encounter in completing high school. Schools must adopt policies that embrace the cultural resources and knowledge of entire communities and acknowledge the value of diversity.[17] Educators ought to form

[17]Richard R. Valencia, ed., *Chicano School Failure and Success: Research and Policy Agendas for the 1990s* (London: Falmer, 1991) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 387 279); and Reyes and Halcón, *Best for Our Children.*

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partnerships with parents to help all children succeed. These partnerships are especially important in overcoming the barriers created by the numerous and growing standardized testing demands.

Pushing Open the Gates: Gaining Access to a Postsecondary Education

It is difficult to provide accurate statistics on migrant students' attendance and graduation rates in postsecondary education because few programs, if any, track students beyond high school graduation. However, logic would imply that migrant students face similar, if not greater, barriers than other linguistically and culturally diverse students when trying to access higher education opportunities. This section analyzes two significant issues confronting migrant students in their postsecondary education efforts. First, as with many other students, math remains the greatest obstacle to college access and success, acting as a gate-keeping tool in the selection of students for college. Second, a body of knowledge, or hidden curriculum, exists for the college bound; however, it is difficult to access, especially for migrant students.[18]

For the most part, access to college preparatory math remains an elusive goal for migrant students. Many schools begin a two-tiered math curriculum as early as sixth grade by creating a single and exclusive pathway toward Algebra I courses in middle school and, ultimately, *the* calculus course in high school. Students in this upper tier are better prepared for college admissions and placement tests as well as for college curricula. Advanced math courses also provide a strong foundation for related high school courses, such as chemistry and physics, that complete the college preparatory curriculum. While districts should help more students gain access to these courses, few have offered such *right of entry* to all students and parents.[19]

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[18]Susan Morse and Patricia Cahape Hammer, *Migrant Students Attending College: Facilitating Their Success* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1998) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 423 097); and Pedro Reyes and Andrea Rorrer, *Ways To Improve Mathematics Education for Migrant Students: Training Modules* (Austin: Texas Education Agency, 1999).

[19]José Moreno, *The Elusive Quest for Equality: 150 Years of Chicano/Chicana Education*, Harvard Educational Review Reprint Series No. 32 (Cambridge: Harvard Education Publishing Group, 1999).

A discreet ensemble of knowledge assists students wanting to pursue postsecondary education. Prerequisites for higher education include a maze of financial-aid forms, college admissions tests, placement exams, college applications and essays, and other unpublicized details. Clearly, some privileged students have access to this ***bidden curriculum*** while many other students are vaguely aware of it through informal conversations. However, migrant students are not likely to be part of the chosen group, nor are they likely to participate in the informal conversations. Schools need to consider how to institutionalize access to this knowledge for *all* students.

In fictional Scenario 3, Sylvia is right on track but will need plenty of help from her teachers and counselors. First, they must encourage and support her in math and science coursework, a necessity for any future engineering studies. Sylvia's movement from school to school will make continuity of curricula and completion rather difficult. The schools must use comprehensible and supportive language to inform Sylvia and her family about necessary college financial aid, standardized tests, and admissions. For example, high schools participate in college nights but often fail to deliver effective and/or bilingual notices and information. If Sylvia attends a high school with a large enrollment, she could easily fall through the cracks. Above all, schools should recognize their responsibility to students like Sylvia by revealing the many hidden elements of the transition to postsecondary education.

Scenario 3: A College-Bound Student

Sylvia Martinez is an eighth-grade honor student at Memorial Junior High School in Nogales, Arizona. Her family has migrated to Sydney, Montana, for as long as Sylvia can remember. Sylvia just finished an Algebra I class for high school credit and is enrolled in a computer program that allows her to take a laptop computer to Montana to work on coursework through NovaNet, an on-line curriculum. This summer, Sylvia will take a yet-undetermined social studies elective. She would like to work ahead in math, but her counselor is opposed because of the district's policy of not allowing accelerated courses during the summer. Sylvia will work on her laptop while attending summer school in Montana as well as Oregon. The family will move to Eagle Pass, Texas, in early August before school starts. Sylvia wants to be the first in her family to attend college and plans to major in engineering.

Because economic demands place greater emphasis on education beyond K-12, it is important for schools to reexamine their policies and practices with regards to future attendance and success in higher

education. State accountability systems throughout the country have begun to scrutinize the enrollment of students in the varying types of high school diploma plans. Particular attention should be given to the numbers and types of students tracked into diploma plans that provide access to higher education. Schools with an emphasis on college-bound plans are not only publicly recognized but also touted as models for others to follow. Beyond the important coursework are the many facets of preparing students for college, including standardized admissions exams and application forms that can sometimes discourage migrant students. Again, schools should be compelled to demystify these processes, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to gain access to and experience success in higher education.

The Next Step: Addressing the Needs of Secondary Migrant Students

The array of formal and informal practices that affect credit accrual, prevent dropping out, and promote postsecondary transition have vital implications for educators. First, educators need to enact more considerate policies and have greater awareness of migrant issues. Second, migrant drop-out prevention depends heavily on culturally relevant pedagogy, increased parent involvement, and improved approaches for high-stakes standardized testing. Finally, migrant students must have access to advanced math and the hidden curriculum.

Education is primarily a state responsibility, creating little impetus for instituting a national high school diploma; thus, migrant students probably will continue to experience credit accrual difficulties. In response, educators should advocate vigilantly for the reinstatement of an easily accessible and useful national record-keeping system. A long-neglected imperative is the establishment of a national database that includes cross-referenced state/district requirements and that records a student's progress toward a high school diploma. On a local level, policies need to be more flexible in recognizing the previous work migrant students have accomplished toward a high school diploma. Likewise, school staff must be provided with greater awareness and support as they work through the maze of credit requirements.

While a great deal of research has targeted drop-out prevention

for women, ethnic minorities, and English language learners, such efforts have not necessarily considered the complex social and academic needs of migrant students. The high mobility of migrant students should be given special consideration when designing, restructuring, or implementing drop-out prevention programs and policies. Educators should foster culturally relevant learning environments in which migrant students can comfortably incorporate their knowledge and skills.

Effective communication between the school and parents also is critical in enhancing the education experience of migrant secondary students. Schools must inform migrant parents about students' educational progress, options at the secondary level, and possibilities for postsecondary education. Finally, researchers should examine how high-stakes testing policies negatively affect the education and graduation opportunities of migrant students. Migrant students should be adequately prepared to tackle the exit-level standardized tests required for graduation in many states.

Migrant students should have equal access to higher education. The hidden curriculum and, in particular, the key math courses, must become target areas of advocacy for educators. Without opportunities and support within the college-bound curriculum, migrant students will remain excluded and disenfranchised. Migrants must have access to the rich curriculum that adequately prepares them for postsecondary education. Simply having entry into a track labeled "college preparatory" is not adequate. A diploma in hand is meaningless if students have not been equipped with the necessary tools, skills, and knowledge to have access to and succeed in higher education. Secondary educators must ensure that migrants, along with all other students, learn the content material that will ensure achievement at the postsecondary level. Like all students, migrant children and their families deserve an egalitarian and democratic education system.

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